Discussion with EU on basmati import and sugar export

2467. SHRI S. RAMACHANDRAN PILLAI: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether the issues for retaining duty free quota of basmati rice imports and to restore the quota for duty free sugar exports were raised by India with the European Union delegation recently in New Delhi;

(b) whether the WTO liberalisation was to avoid trade distortions but after having adopted common principle on world trade there is a need for special and differential treatment of developing countries; and

(c) if so, what were the decisions taken in the meeting?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY (SHRI DIGVUAY SINGH): (a) to (c) Yes Sir. Multilateral and bilateral issues relating to agriculture including the issues of export of basmati rice and sugar were raised with the Commissioner for Agriculture of the European Union (EU) during his visit to India and also in the India-EC Joint Commission meeting held in New Delhi in February 2001. The European Commission took note of India's concerns for appropriate consideration on issues relating to export of basmati rice and sugar.

The WTO Agreement on Agriculture aims at establishing a fair and market-oriented agricultural trading system by providing for substantial progressive reductions in agricultural support and protection resulting in correcting and preventing restrictions and distortions in world agricultural markets. Further, to ensure fair and equitable benefits to the developing countries, Special and Differential (S and D) treatment clauses have been incorporated in various Agreements under the WTO including in the WTO Agreement on Agriculture. During the discussions with Commissioner for Agriculture, India had emphasised the need for further strengthening of the Special and Differential treatment clauses during the ongoing negotiations in agriculture so as to, *inter alia,* enable the developing countries to take care of the food security and livelihood concerns.

Foreign tours of ITPO officials

† 2468. SHRI RAMA SHANKER KAUSHIK: Will the Minister of COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY be pleased to state:

(a) whether crores of rupees of the country are spent on foreign tours of

† Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.